

State of North Carolina



MICHAEL F. EASLEY
GOVERNOR

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF PUBLIC SCHOOL INTEGRATION

2008

A PROCLAMATION

BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

WHEREAS, the United States Supreme Court in the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision held that segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race is unconstitutional; and

WHEREAS, the nation's High Court thereby set aside the "separate but equal" doctrine and demanded that states proceed "with all deliberate speed" to integrate the nation's public schools; and

WHEREAS, segregation, as of 1954, was firmly entrenched throughout North Carolina and the South, whether by social custom or by statutory authority; and

WHEREAS, debates at the executive, legislative, and judicial levels of government over integration and the means by which it might be accomplished extended over the course of several years; and

WHEREAS, school boards and local school superintendents—Benjamin L. Smith in Greensboro, Elmer Garinger in Charlotte, and Craig Phillips in Winston-Salem—in the summer of 1957 devised a plan to facilitate the enrollment of black students that fall at previously all-white schools; and

WHEREAS, on September 4, 1957, Josephine Boyd (Bradley) at Greensboro Senior High School, along with Brenda Florence, Jimmy Florence, Russell Herring, Elijah Herring, and Harold Davis at Gillespie Elementary School integrated the schools in Greensboro; and

WHEREAS, that same day, Dorothy Counts (Scoggins) at Harding Senior High School, Gustevas Roberts at Central Senior High School, Girvaud Roberts (Justice) at Piedmont Junior High School, and Delois Huntley at Alexander Graham Junior High School integrated the schools in Charlotte; and

WHEREAS, on the following day, Gwendolyn Bailey (Coleman) enrolled at Reynolds High School and thereby integrated the schools in Winston-Salem; and

WHEREAS, many of these students and their families bravely faced threats, slurs, and angry crowds as they sought to take advantage of their constitutional right to a non-segregated public education; and

WHEREAS, the three school administrators remained resolute in their determination to carry out the mandate of the court while maintaining discipline, order, and a positive learning environment for all students; and

WHEREAS, September 4, 1957, was the same day that black students attempted to integrate schools in Little Rock, Arkansas, resulting in violence and the deployment of troops by the federal government; and

WHEREAS, the path to social justice is oftentimes difficult and in constant need of individuals determined to advance its cause;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, MICHAEL F. EASLEY, Governor of the State of North Carolina, hereby do honor and commend those students and administrators who with courage and conviction took the necessary first steps to integrate the public schools of North Carolina a half-century ago.




MICHAEL F. EASLEY

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Great Seal of the State of North Carolina at the Capitol in Raleigh, this 11th day of June in the year of our Lord two thousand and eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the hundred and thirty-second.